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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixtieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1288th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 February 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Eighth periodic report of Denmark (continued) (CEDAW/C/DNK/8; CEDAW/C/DNK/Q/8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Denmark took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 7 to 9 (continued)

2. **Ms. Appel** (Denmark) said that the number of Danish women representatives to the European Parliament had fallen by just one as a result of the 2014 election and that Denmark had a long-standing tradition of electing female European commissioners. All citizens had the right to stand for election without discrimination of any kind. The issue of equal participation in public and political life was debated in the media and women were able to influence democratic processes by, inter alia, serving on the governing boards of schools and day-care institutions.

3. **Ms. Hansen** (Denmark) said that failure to comply with the Danish model mentioned in paragraph 18 of the replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/DNK/Q/8/Add.1) was punishable by law. No sanctions had been imposed to date as the model had only recently been introduced, but companies had been reminded of their obligations. Since 2014, the percentage of companies included in the model whose boards had struck a gender balance had risen from 2 to 17 per cent. Among state-owned companies, almost half had achieved gender balance at board level.

4. **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) said that the participation of women in international relations was a key concern for the Government, which had contributed to discussions on the role of women in the peace processes in Somalia, Mali and Tunisia.

5. **Mr. Kieffer-Kristensen** (Denmark) said that Denmark was a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It granted nationality to persons born in its territory who would otherwise be stateless on application to the Ministry of Justice. In response to a controversial incident that had come to a head in 2011 involving the denial of citizenship, a parliamentary commission had been established to ensure compliance with international instruments relating to statelessness and a unit had been set up within the Ministry of Justice to handle cases that raised issues under those instruments.

6. In May 2013, the Government had concluded a political agreement on the conditions for acquiring nationality, with special provisions for stateless applicants. Moreover, a website had been created to inform stateless persons of their rights under domestic law, which, in his view, did not need to be amended. The Government acted in compliance with the *Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons* published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

7. **Mr. Hertz** (Denmark) said that, between 2008 and 2011, 39 women and 8 men had been murdered by their partner or ex-partner.

8. **Ms. Jahan** said that she would appreciate further information on the nationality agreement of May 2013. The delegation should also indicate whether the minimum age requirement for spouses/partners to apply for a residence permit on the grounds of family reunification had been relaxed.

9. **Mr. Kieffer-Kristensen** (Denmark) said that the 2013 agreement, which was accessible through the website of the Ministry of Justice, had been concluded by political parties with the aim of expediting naturalization cases and encouraging the competent authorities to place greater emphasis on international obligations.

10. The so-called 24-year rule to qualify for family reunification was a gender-neutral requirement introduced in 2002 to prevent forced marriages and promote the integration of persons with an immigrant background. Studies had shown the rule to be effective: between 2000 and 2008, the percentage of 23-year-old women with an immigrant background who had been married had fallen from 46 to 19 per cent.

Articles 10 to 14

11. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wished to know what temporary special measures were in place to encourage girls to study technical subjects, for which the take-up rates remained low, and would appreciate gender-disaggregated data on educational funding. It was not clear why the increase in the number of women professors in academia since 2009 had been disproportionately low, what was being done to address the situation, whether all universities had adopted similar temporary special measures and, if so, whether follow-up had been given and gender impact assessments carried out. She also noted that there appeared to be no national postgraduate or doctoral courses on gender studies.

12. She asked what steps were planned to raise awareness of the Innovation Fund Denmark, which, according to reports, was relatively little known, and encouraged the State party to incorporate a gender component in teacher-training curricula. Lastly, she would appreciate gender-disaggregated data on students with disabilities and on the education system in Greenland, where no temporary special measures had been adopted.

13. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether there were plans to promote women's access to full-time work and campaigns to raise public awareness of the importance of sharing domestic responsibilities. The delegation should comment on the fact that 94 per cent of parental leave was taken by women and that, in the Faroe Islands and Greenland, a large proportion of women were employed as part-time caregivers.

14. She wished to know whether migrant workers had the same labour rights as citizens and whether Denmark intended to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The delegation should also indicate when the Government expected to achieve equality with regard to women on company boards and in management positions if current trends continued.

15. **Mr. Bruun** said that he would be grateful if the delegation could comment on reports that: there were no systematic policies to address unequal pay and gender segregation in the labour market; employees who suspected wage discrimination had no independent right of access to information on the wages of co-workers; there were many cases of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy; and progress with regard to paternity leave had been slow. He asked whether Denmark planned to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) to afford greater protection to aux pairs and what was the status of the bill on public procurement mentioned in paragraph 18 of the replies to the list of issues.

16. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that the national downward trend in the number of abortions since 2009 was not reflected in Greenland. Regarding the Faroe Islands, she said that she would welcome age-disaggregated statistics on abortion and enquired about the process of authorizing abortions among women with severe mental or physical disabilities. The delegation should indicate what steps were taken to ensure that the reproductive rights of such women were not violated.

17. Turning to the issue of sexual health, she would appreciate additional information on the scale, coverage and outcomes of the prevention packages and model referred to in paragraph 19 of the replies to the list of issues. The delegation should also elaborate on central government policies to combat HIV/AIDS and indicate what progress had been achieved since 2009. Lastly, she wished to have information on the leading causes of death in Denmark and asked why the life expectancy of men had grown by more than that of women between 2000 and 2011.

18. **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) said that there was equal access to universities and higher education generally and women constituted 56 per cent of the intake. All higher educational institutions were required to have strategies to promote gender equality, but exceptional steps were being taken to improve the gender balance in science. Thus the Danish Council for Independent Research had since 2013 been trying to remove the invisible barriers preventing the advance of women. The heads of higher educational institutions were required to submit annual reports stating and accounting for the gender balance in their institutions. Both men and women had to be represented in steering groups for projects supported by the Council. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science had appointed a task force to promote gender equality.

19. **Mr. Feldbaek Winther** (Denmark) said that equal access and treatment were a basic principle of the educational system, but girls were performing better than boys at every level, from primary school to university. Various projects were, however, being undertaken to encourage women to enter the sciences, engineering and mathematics. One project aimed to show girls that information technology involved not just computers but also cooperation and team work. In another project, the Danish Institute for Human Rights had carried out an analysis of gender mainstreaming in youth guidance centres. The results of all the 10 projects undertaken were available online. Since 2013, the House of Natural Sciences had held an open day at which girls could be introduced to technical education and meet role models. A website entitled "The future is yours" provided information on the available opportunities. Denmark currently held the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers and aimed to carry out an analysis of girls' involvement in science and to help children choose their speciality freely, without succumbing to gender stereotypes.

20. **Ms. Kisling** (Denmark) said, with regard to gender equality in the labour market, more women worked part time than men, but it should be remembered that part-time work could also be a stepping stone to the full-time labour market or a way of keeping women in work by enabling them to balance their private and professional lives. At the same time, it could be difficult to move from part-time to full-time work, so the Government was focusing on the proportion of women in full-time work. The municipalities and regions had adopted recruitment policies for the care sector, in which new positions would be full time. Equally, gender segregation in the labour market persisted and the Ministry of Employment had allocated funds to map the trends in that area. A report on the issue would be completed by the end of 2015 and would form the basis for future policy. In order to promote equal pay for work of equal value, the Government had introduced new regulations — and extended the previous regulations to smaller companies — requiring companies to produce gender-disaggregated statistics. As a follow-up, a manual on implementing the rules would be drawn up. As for the question of parental leave, women and men had equal rights, but mothers still took the majority of available shared leave. However, the proportion of leave taken by fathers was rising. Denmark had just concluded the latest round of collective bargaining for the public sector, which allowed for temporary special measures to be taken regarding pay during parental leave for fathers. Such measures would encourage fathers to take more leave and promote equal sharing of parental leave. With regard to the question of aux pairs, there were no plans to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

21. **Ms. Appel** (Denmark) said that the Government would shortly submit a new law on public procurement to the parliament, under which contract terms and conditions would include the promotion of equality between women and men and increased participation by women in the labour market. In 2013, Denmark had established the Council for Private-Public Cooperation to support competition for public sector contracts that promoted gender equality. The Council itself was required to have a fair balance between the sexes and currently comprised of 10 women and 8 men.

22. **Ms. Findsen** (Denmark) said that women in Denmark had had the right to an induced abortion before the end of the twelfth week of pregnancy since 1973. The number of abortions had decreased from 16,736 in 2009 to 15,073 in 2013. The abortion rate had fallen from 13.4 per cent per 1,000 women in 2009 to 11.9 per cent per 1,000 women in 2013. Rates were also falling among 15–19-year-olds, from 2,373 in 2011 to 2,163 in 2013. Women were also entitled to various services, including counselling before and after an abortion.

23. A number of measures had been taken to improve sexual health, both centrally and in the health policies of most municipalities, which were provided with support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by the Government to train health professionals, establish health networks and provide advice. A centre had been set up to advise the municipalities and its performance would be carefully monitored. A model for strengthening sexual health had been developed and evaluated. Extra funds had been allocated and education on sexual health was provided by several municipalities. The Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Danish Family Planning Association, would develop materials relating to sex and the body, relationships and sexuality. The sexual health of minority groups was a priority for the Government, with some projects targeting immigrant women generally and others targeting specific ethnic groups. One initiative had been to train peer educators to help women in socially troubled communities. Outreach and antenatal care was also provided for socially disadvantaged persons across the country, including women from minority groups. With regard to HIV/AIDS, she said that, in 2013, there had been 54 new cases of women contracting HIV; by the end of 2013, a total of 1,798 women had tested positive for HIV since 1990, of whom two thirds were of non-Danish ethnic background. Women were not specifically targeted in HIV/AIDS initiatives, but formed one of the risk groups, along with intravenous drug abusers.

24. As for life expectancy, she was able to provide the Committee with the latest figures: life expectancy for women had risen to 82.7 years in 2014, as against 78.5 years for men. It was a record for Denmark but still lower than in other countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

25. **Ms. Olesen** (Greenland, Denmark) said that she could not provide specific data on women's education in Greenland, where a very low number of people sought education at all. In 2012, 57 per cent of women had sought education, as against 43 per cent of men. In 2013, the percentages had been 54 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men and the proportion had risen again in 2014, with 57 per cent of women as against 43 per cent of men. There had been an increase in the number of women and men getting an education leading to qualification: between 2009 and 2013 the number of people completing training leading to qualifications had risen by 14 per cent and women constituted 61 per cent of the total number. In higher education, there were more than twice as many women as men: 69 per cent, as against 31 per cent of men. In that connection, she said that, since applications for higher education had to be made on 1 March, the Government ran a campaign every February to attract both sexes into education. Equally, efforts were made to attract men into work traditionally done by women, and vice versa. With regard to abortion rates, she said that they were unacceptably high. The Government was trying various approaches, including the doll project, in which girls — and also boys — aged around 12 to 14 were

given a lifelike baby doll to look after. The scheme had proved fairly effective, in that the chores involved made the children realize that early motherhood might not be very attractive. In addition, contraceptives were provided free and campaigns were frequently run to discourage young people from engaging in dangerous sexual activities or risking pregnancy. It was, however, a slow process.

26. **Mr. Helgason** (Faroe Islands, Denmark) said that the gender segregation in the labour market in the Faroe Islands was a problem, one example being the fact that 94 per cent of workers in the care sector were women. Generally, women tended to dominate the public sector and men the private sector, in such areas as fisheries and aquaculture. More than half of all Faroese women worked part time, less than 35 hours per week. There was, however, a political consensus that reforms should be made and there were grounds for optimism. There was no difficulty with access to the labour market for women and childcare was easily available and cheap. A complicating factor was that, out of a population of 49,000, there was a deficit of 2,000 women. With regard to abortion, he could not say why the number of abortions among females under 18 had dropped. The explanation might be simply that young women were more aware of contraceptive measures. The abortion law in the Faroe Islands dated back to 1956 and, although many plans to revise it had been put forward, there was still no consensus on change. Abortion could be allowed where there was a risk to a woman's life or health, where the pregnancy was due to rape or where the foetus showed serious damage leading to mental or physical disability. Abortion was not as easily accessible as in Denmark or Greenland. The decision on whether to refer a woman for an abortion was made by a doctor. An advisory service had been set up in 2007 offering free and confidential advice about abortion.

27. **Ms. Pomeranzi**, after commending the delegation on its many successes in the advancement of women, asked whether there was any reason why the proportion of women entrepreneurs seemed not to have risen from the level of 25–27 per cent registered in 2011. Secondly, she noted that there was an increasing risk for women in Denmark of living in poverty, owing to the fact that Denmark did not have a national poverty line and so had no specific measures to tackle the issue. She asked whether there were targeted measures for women living in remote settlements in Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

28. **Ms. Gabr** asked what challenges were faced by rural women in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, what plans were in place to support those living in remote areas and whether they were considered to fully enjoy their human rights. She said that she wished to know what action was taken in Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands in order to assist other groups of disadvantaged women, such as older women and women with disabilities. She asked what steps had been taken to ensure that migrant women could preserve their cultural identity while living in harmony with the wider society.

29. The requirement that both spouses applying for family reunification must be at least 24 years of age would not in itself prevent forced marriage, as the family of the spouse living outside Denmark could simply wait until the person concerned reached that age before forcing her to join her husband. What was being done to prevent such scheming? More awareness-raising and outreach measures were required. Turning to the situation of stateless women and their children, she said that general recommendation No. 32, on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, should be taken into account when considering cases involving asylum seekers.

30. **Ms. Kisling** (Denmark) said that, in 2014, the Government had extended its "maternity equalization scheme" to self-employed persons, under which additional pay was provided to self-employed persons on maternity, paternity or parental leave. All self-employed persons were obligated to contribute to the scheme, which was self-funding.

31. **Ms. Hansen** (Denmark) said that in the Danish welfare system, grants and benefits were based on the income and the marital status of the citizen: single parents were entitled to several types of child support and received greater housing benefits. In Denmark, far more women than men were single parents and therefore more of them received benefits, even though most divorced fathers participated in the maintenance of their children. Since submitting its seventh periodic report, Demark had made some adjustments to the rules governing family benefits, which had improved the economic situation of single parents, including the single parents of children conceived by artificial insemination, and adoptive single parents, the majority of whom were women.

32. A national poverty index in Denmark measured the income of single and cohabiting parents over a three-year period. The most recent statistics identified 42,000 persons as being poor out of a population of 5 million.

33. As a result of educational and career choices, women tended to leave and men to remain in rural areas; between 2008 and 2014, the number of municipalities with less than 90 women per 100 men between the ages of 20 and 29, had risen from 37 to 59.

34. **Ms. Johansen Karman** (Denmark), referring to the question of forced marriage, said that the idea behind the 24-year rule to qualify for family reunification was that young persons of that age would be better able to withstand the pressure to marry against their will. Statistics showed that there had been a positive change in social and marriage patterns since the law had been introduced, as the percentage of female non-Western immigrants who married between the ages of 17 and 23 had decreased from 40 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2012 while the number of young immigrants in education had risen significantly.

35. **Ms. Birch Møller** (Denmark) said that the Government had introduced a range of strategies and awareness-raising initiatives in order to combat forced marriages, including a national strategy against honour-related conflicts and a strategy against parallel legal concepts which aimed to prevent women and minors from being forced into a religious marriage or kept in a religious marriage against their will.

36. **Ms. Olesen** (Greenland, Denmark), turning to the question of women living in remote villages in Greenland, said that the country faced specific challenges in relation to its geography, climate and demography; approximately 56,000 inhabitants lived in 18 towns and a large number of small settlements in the world's largest island. Since the economy was limited and fragile and the country lacked educated labour, it was not possible for the country to establish the same social measures as those of its Nordic neighbours. Women and men had equal access to education and health care in Greenland, although living conditions and traditional gender patterns had an impact on the life of rural women: they must either make the radical choice to pursue an education or find employment in a city that was several hundred kilometres from their home or stay in the settlement and live in a traditional manner. Old age forced women and men to move to the city, although many indicated that they would prefer to stay in their settlements. Housing and institutions were provided for women with disabilities in the larger settlements and cities.

37. **Ms. Jóansdóttir** (Faroe Islands, Denmark) said that although a national poverty line had not been established for the Faroe Islands, a well-functioning welfare system provided financial support and facilities for poorer women, the elderly and people with disabilities.

38. The Faroe Islands occupied 1,399 square kilometres split between 18 islands, many of which were connected by tunnels and the most remote of which could be reached by boat within two hours. Therefore, the problem of women living in remote or rural areas did not exist, although there were of course some women who had chosen to move to the capital or to Denmark.

Articles 15 and 16

39. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, under the 2007 Act on Parental Responsibility, parents in Denmark had joint physical custody of their children, with children spending an equal amount of time in the residence of each parent even where one parent objected to such an arrangement. Nevertheless, as had been pointed out by a number of Danish non-governmental organizations during a meeting with the Committee, the focus on cooperation and equality between the parents had distracted attention away from the need to take proper measures in cases involving situations of domestic violence. Sweden, which had had similar child custody arrangements, had amended its law once it had established that the imposition of shared residence on uncooperative parents put children at great risk while the mothers refrained from reporting abuse. She asked whether the State party had put in place a mechanism to monitor the outcome of the Act.

40. Turning to the economic consequences of divorce or separation, she asked whether the regime of community property provided for under the 1992 Act on the Legal Effects of Marriage applied also to couples who cohabited but were not married and, if not, what safeguards were in place to protect women in de facto unions. She asked what forms of matrimonial property were covered under the Act and in particular whether due account was taken of the fact that women might not have been able to accrue the same pension rights as men.

41. **Ms. Hansen** (Denmark) said that approximately 46 per cent of marriages in Denmark ended in divorce and some 28,000 cases of child custody and access were dealt with every year. All decisions on custody and access were based on the best interests of the child and the emphasis was on the right of children to have access to their parents and not on the right of parents to have access to the child. Decisions on access always took into account the needs that were specific to the child. If a parent had been violent to another parent or to other family members then a child welfare investigation would be conducted and a decision to grant or deny access or to allow supervised access would be made.

42. Having recognized that a divorce was a situation of crisis for both parents and children which could not be solely remedied by the law, Denmark had begun two pilot projects offering counselling and conflict-resolution advice in a bid to promote collaboration in the best interests of the child.

43. **Mr. Hertz** (Denmark) said that although de facto unions were not covered under legislation governing the economic consequences of divorce, case law dating back to the 1980s provided that a partner who had taken care of the home over a long period should receive compensation from a higher earning partner upon separation. On the question of matrimonial property, a law dating back to 1925 provided that, if no other agreement had been made, all property was to be divided equally upon divorce.

44. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that although some data had been provided, she could not express complete satisfaction with the answers given; she hoped to receive more information on isolated minorities that would allow the Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of any measures taken. More detailed information on Greenland and the Faroe Islands should be provided in the next periodic report.

45. **Mr. Bruun** said that some statistical information on Greenland and the Faroe Islands had been provided during the dialogue which he would appreciate receiving in writing for further consideration. He wished to know whether there was an obligation that the bill on public procurement, which was shortly to be presented to the parliament in Denmark, would be used to promote equality.

46. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** thanked the delegation for its replies to her questions on family law, divorce and child custody and drew attention to general recommendation No.

29 on economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, which delineated the principles that she had attempted to express.

47. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether the State party had envisaged any campaigns to rectify the overrepresentation of women in part-time work. She wished to know whether the State party intended to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

48. **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) said that the delegation had tried both in its report and subsequently to provide information on challenges experienced in all parts of the Kingdom of Denmark and it would seek to improve on the data provided in its following report. With respect to the bill on public procurement, the possibility to promote equality would be an option and not an obligation. There was no intention at present to ratify the Migrant Workers Convention.

49. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for their constructive dialogue with the Committee, which had provided further insight into the situation of women and girls in Denmark, and encouraged the State party to take all necessary measures to address the various recommendations of the Committee.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.30 p.m.